



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Introduction

Citation for published version:

Keown, M, Murphy, D & Procter, J 2009, Introduction: Theorizing Postcolonial Diasporas. in M Keown, D Murphy & J Procter (eds), *Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-15.
<<http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?pid=280276>>

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Keown, M., Murphy, D., & Procter, J. (2009). Introduction: Theorizing Postcolonial Diasporas. In M. Keown, D. Murphy, & J. Procter (Eds.), *Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas*. (pp. 1-15). Palgrave Macmillan. reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

This extract is taken from the author's original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive, published, version of record is available here: <http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/comparing-postcolonial-diasporas-michelle-keown/?K=9780230547087>.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

Introduction: theorising postcolonial diasporas

Diaspora has become an increasingly 'diasporic' concept within postcolonial studies during the past decade. Once referring specifically to the dispersal of the Jews, within contemporary cultural analysis the term is more likely to evoke a plethora of global movements and migrations: Romanian, African, Asian, black, Sikh, Irish, Lebanese, Palestinian, 'Atlantic' and so on. A corresponding expansion of diaspora's conceptual horizons has also taken place in recent years as it comes to operate as a travelling metaphor associated with tropes of mobility, displacement, borders and crossings. This edited collection reflects critically on the significance of 'postcolonial diasporas' at a time when the term's horizons appear more stretched and hazy than ever before. Bringing together a group of leading and emerging intellectuals working across the disciplines of history, sociology and literary analysis, it examines both the contributions and limitations of the term and the problems and possibilities it presents for future work in the humanities.

It is notable that in exploring the legacy of empire, postcolonial research has tended to focus on individual nations rather than investigating comparative links between empires. This edited collection will move beyond the predominantly Anglophone focus of postcolonial diaspora scholarship to date, and will instead investigate postcolonial diaspora culture within a much wider range of cultural and linguistic contexts: Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanic, and Neerlandophone. Contributors to this anthology offer complex and nuanced analyses of postcolonial diaspora culture by establishing links across various transnational axes, thus eschewing reductive binaristic approaches to the analysis of Europe and its colonies.

The essays in the collection are grouped into three main sections, each of which explores postcolonial diaspora culture within a particular methodological, geographical or thematic paradigm. Essays in section one ('Discovering Europe'), for example, offer carefully situated analyses of cultural production across Europe in order to raise fresh questions about the continent as an internally differentiated, diasporic location, while

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

contributors to sections two ('Nostalgia and the Longing for Home') and three ('Comparative Diasporic Contexts') explore a range of diasporic contexts beyond Europe, focusing not only upon the dialectic between the absent 'homeland' and the new diasporic community, but also upon relationships between different diasporic communities dispersed across multiple geographical locations. Individual essays and subsections are summarised in more detail below, but this introductory chapter also explores some of the crosscurrents running through the collection, situating the work of the various contributors within wider debates in postcolonial studies. The section immediately below, for example, discusses one of the most important methodological shifts currently taking place in postcolonial studies: the move beyond Anglophone studies and into more complex comparative linguistic paradigms, some of which are explored and advanced in this collection. The remaining two sections of the chapter refer more specifically to some of the main theoretical frameworks informing the tripartite structure of the book, offering a brief overview of the essays included in each individual category.

Beyond Anglophone Postcolonial Studies

By the turn of the millennium, there were growing fears that postcolonial studies risked stagnation in a sterile process of anthologization in which a heavily circumscribed range of critics and concepts were endlessly cross-referenced.¹ This situation prompted many postcolonial scholars to return to first principles in questioning the status and nature of their field, a process that was given a new impetus by the events of 9/11 and the Iraq War.² As Empire began to rear its head so clearly on the international stage, there emerged a clear desire to move beyond the premature celebration of a globalised

¹ See, in particular, Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

² For example, see the forthcoming special issue of *New Formations* on 'Postcolonial Studies after Iraq' (2006).

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

hybridity, which was believed by many critics to have come to dominate the field.³ This same period has also witnessed growing calls for postcolonial studies to expand its horizons not only to include texts in languages other than English, but also to include the analysis of non-literary material.

It is this desire to move beyond postcolonial studies' virtually exclusive focus on Anglophone literary texts and contexts that forms one of the organising principles of this collection. For, as it is currently constituted, postcolonial studies refers almost exclusively to 'Anglophone' literature, or to cite Harish Trivedi's stinging rebuke, 'the postcolonial has ears only for English'.⁴ In their analysis of *The Empire Writes Back*, perhaps the key foundational text of postcolonial studies, Celia Britton and Michael Syrotinski argue that the attempt by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin to define the boundaries of a new academic field within English Literature Departments effectively led to the exclusion of non-English material from the postcolonial paradigm.⁵ On their opening page, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* claim that '[t]his book is concerned with writing by those peoples formerly colonized by Britain, *though much of what it deals with is of interest and relevance to countries colonized by other European powers, such as France, Portugal and Spain*' (p.1; our emphasis). Within this brief sentence is captured a major ambiguity that has marked the development of postcolonial studies. Although the field sets out to analyse a worldwide phenomenon — the opening line of the book states that '[m]ore than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism' (p.1) — it touches on other colonial contexts only to shut them off simultaneously as potential fields of further inquiry, and more widely it has neglected works not written in English (as Trivedi

³ Peter Hallward provides a particularly withering critique of this approach in his groundbreaking book, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001), pp.xiv-xv.

⁴ Harish Trivedi, 'The Postcolonial or the transcolonial? Location and language', *Interventions*, 1.2 (1999), pp.269-72 (p.272).

⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); Celia Britton and Michael Syrotinski, 'Introduction', in *Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Britton and Syrotinski, *Paragraph*, 24.3 (2001), pp.1-11 (p.4).

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

argues). This has often led to an assumption that the tenets of postcolonial theory are applicable to all postcolonial situations but little analysis has been carried out to support such a claim: in *The Empire Writes Back*, the authors make only fleeting references to Francophone (and Hispanophone) authors, such as Edouard Glissant, Aimé Césaire or Léopold Senghor, drafting in certain key ideas in support of their general conclusions rather than investigating the specificity of their postcolonial contexts.

It is of course understandable that Anglophone scholars have focused on postcolonial material in English, and the continuing importance of pioneering work by the likes of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin should not be underestimated. It would be easy with hindsight to sneer at those who put down the first markers outlining the shape of this new field. Despite its flaws, postcolonial studies is to be praised for its success in carving out an academic home for 'new literatures in English': an occasional tendency towards excessive generalisation was perhaps the price to be paid for forging a space in which the literatures of Africa, Asia and the Pacific could somehow co-habit (in a loosely comparative framework). Nonetheless, it seems curious that so little attention has been given to non-Anglophone contexts, when colonialism not only brought Europe into conflict with its non-European 'others', but was also the source of endless rivalry and conflict between European powers. Postcolonial studies might thus be argued — building on the ideas of Britton and Syrotinski cited above — to have been more concerned with carving out a field within English literary studies than with creating an academic field focused primarily on the question of Empire and its legacy.

The main challenge to the Anglophone focus of postcolonial studies has emerged from within French/Francophone Studies. From the early 1990s, there has been a rapid growth in critical reflection on the relationship between postcolonial studies and the field of Francophone studies.⁶ After a phase of intense critical inquiry and debate on the

⁶ In particular, there have been many special issues of prominent journals dedicated to this topic over the past few years. See, for example, *Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Celia Britton and Michael Syrotinski, *Paragraph*, 24.3 (2001); *French and Francophone: The Challenge of Expanding Horizons*, ed. by Farid Laroussi and Christopher L. Miller, *Yale French Studies*, 103 (2003); *Francophone Studies: New Landscapes*, ed. by Françoise Lionnet and Dominic Thomas, *Modern Language Notes*, 118.4

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

connections between what have widely been seen as inter-related but largely parallel fields, we are now witnessing self-conscious attempts at field-construction, which bring them together under the title 'Francophone Postcolonial Studies'.⁷ Clearly, it is to be hoped that Francophone postcolonial studies will foster a greater awareness of linguistic difference as well as the complex process of linguistic and cultural translation. The leading postcolonial critic Gayatri Spivak has long been a champion of 'reading in the original' and her multilingual competence has permitted more nuanced readings of Derrida and other authors. However, the value of Francophone postcolonial studies cannot be reduced to an injunction to read in the original, which is at times portrayed as the source of a 'true', 'originary' meaning. For, as John McLeod has argued so convincingly, the act of 'translating' ideas from one language/culture to another is in itself a process of creating new meanings.⁸ There is a genuine need for the translation of key, Francophone texts into English, but Francophone postcolonial studies must guard against becoming a 'translation' service for colleagues in English Departments. It is the importance of its ideas, not merely its linguistic competence, which marks out the urgency of Francophone postcolonial studies as a project. We recognise the danger of promoting the study of material in French — yet another major, world (i.e. former colonial) language — at the expense of widely used 'indigenous' languages (the true object of Trivedi's comment, cited earlier), and we make no special pleading for French over other languages: as is shown by the range of material and contexts dealt with in the present collection, the 'becoming-multilingual' of postcolonial studies must involve engagement with other language traditions also. For example, Elleke Boehmer's chapter on Dutch postcolonial writing and Patrick Williams's piece on Palestine both open up

(2003); *Le Monde francophone*, *French Forum*, 77.6 (2004); the first three issues of the journal *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*: 1.1 and 1.2 (2003) and 2.1 (2004). Two earlier issues of *Yale French Studies: Post/Colonial Conditions: Exiles, Migrations and Nomadisms*, ed. by Françoise Lionnet and Ronnie Scharfman, 82 and 83 (1993) were extremely influential in setting out the terms of the debate.

⁷ See, in particular, Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, eds, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* (London: Arnold, 2003); H. Adlai Murdoch and Anne Donadey, eds, *Postcolonial Theory and Francophone Literary Studies* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

⁸ John McLeod, 'Contesting contexts: Francophone thought and Anglophone postcolonialism', in Forsdick and Murphy, eds, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, pp.192-201.

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

new lines of inquiry within postcolonial studies, or to use John McLeod's term, they '[render] visible the presence of other colonial and postcolonial trajectories which cannot be neatly bracketed or ignored'.⁹

The bringing together of these different colonial contexts within a single volume constitutes an acknowledgement of the necessity of opening the field to comparative 'transcolonial' approaches. The comparative dimension of postcolonial studies has always been present, allowing the bringing together of material from vastly different geographical locations, although it has not always been recognised or sufficiently theorised.¹⁰ This new push for comparatism re-engages with the project of Edward Said in his seminal 'postcolonial' texts, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), which are both the work of a comparatist heavily influenced by French-language material.

The call for a postcolonial comparatism is at once both extremely ambitious and quietly pragmatic: it demands a re-evaluation of both the European imperial project and of its points of intersection with those non-European Empires that either preceded it or attempted to emulate it; and it is predicated on the development of specifically targeted collaborative, interdisciplinary work of the type outlined by both Graham Huggan and Jacqueline Bardolph.¹¹ Such an approach might ensure that a postcolonial comparatism does not slip into easy generalisation: scholars must constantly be aware of the differences both *between* and *within* colonial traditions (Algeria was not French Polynesia, just as British India was not Nigeria). In choosing to focus on the question of

⁹ John McLeod, 'Reading the Archipelago', *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 1.1 (2003), pp.55-59 (pp.58-59).

¹⁰ One of the first explicit efforts to offer a comparative postcolonialism results more in the juxtaposition of intellectual traditions rather than their interpenetration. See Ashok Bery and Patricia Murray, eds, *Comparing Postcolonial Literatures: Dislocations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999). Ironically, it is in the field of history — often so hostile to postcolonial theory — where extremely interesting research has endeavoured to compare colonial practices and traditions. See Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, eds, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Los Angeles and London; Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds, *Domesticating the Empire: Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville and London: UP of Virginia, 1998).

¹¹ Graham Huggan, 'Postcolonial Studies and the Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity', *Postcolonial Studies*, 5.3 (2002), pp.245-75; Jacqueline Bardolph, *Etudes postcoloniales et littérature* (Paris: Champion, 2001).

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

diaspora, this collection attempts to chart out the type of collaborative, interdisciplinary approach called for by Huggan and Bardolph. Chapters have been grouped thematically in order to provide a comparative framework that is developed briefly in the Introduction to each section. Although most chapters focus on case studies from a single colonial context, specific chapters involve a comparison of different contexts within a colonial tradition (Marshall on 'The French Atlantic') while others involve a direct comparison of both British and other European contexts (Ní Loingsigh on tourism/immigration in France and Britain; McLeod on black British travel writing about continental Europe). Overall, then, the collection seeks to tease out both the possibilities and the limitations of a comparative postcolonial approach, which might serve to inform the work of scholars undertaking more in-depth comparisons in the future.

The collection also chooses to approach the question of diaspora from a range of disciplinary angles. Alongside the literary analysis that has been central to the development of postcolonial studies (in chapters by Boehmer, McLeod, Ní Loingsigh, Williams, Wilson, and Britton) there are also chapters on cinema (Ezra) and music (Knights), as well as more general cultural studies approaches (Marshall, Prasad). This desire to bring together scholars working from a range of disciplinary standpoints should be seen in the context of Graham Huggan's ideas on the anti-disciplinary tendencies that have marked postcolonial studies since its inception.¹² Focusing on the work of Spivak, Bhabha and Said, Huggan argues that the field now needs to develop teamwork-based projects, involving academics from various disciplines, addressing common sets of issues and problems, if it genuinely wishes to expand beyond the analysis of 'Literature'. He distinguishes this interdisciplinary approach from an interdiscursive approach, which, he argues, involves the borrowing of language and ideas from different disciplines in a theoretical, 'synoptic' fashion. For Huggan, this latter approach has been dominant within postcolonial studies, and it has contributed to the oft-criticised theoretical pretensions of the field. An interdisciplinary, teamwork-based approach would provide much-needed

¹² Huggan, 'Postcolonial Studies and the Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity'.

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

empirical analyses with which to reassess certain theoretical paradigms. In two fascinating recent articles, Chris Bongie draws on Huggan's ideas in order to highlight the irony of postcolonial studies' commitment to 'Literature' when so much of its focus has been on breaking down arbitrary cultural and political hierarchies, which one might have presumed would include the attribution of 'value' to certain types of text.¹³ In the early days of postcolonial theory, Kwame Appiah had argued that it was necessary to distinguish between the 'postcolonial' literary culture of an educated African elite and the 'postcolonial' culture of 'popular' cultural producers but few have acted on this in any sustained way.¹⁴ Bongie writes of 'the need for a transformative dialogue with cultural studies', which might allow postcolonial studies to address the main concerns of its critics. Through its exploration of diaspora from a range of perspectives and in a range of postcolonial contexts —Europe, America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Middle East — this collection acts as a contribution to this 'transformative dialogue'. In the following sections, then, we will explore some of the comparative and collaborative aspects of diaspora both in Europe and in the wider world respectively, addressing issues which inform the three main groupings of essays included in the collection.

Comparing Diasporas in Europe

Bill Ashcroft has argued that '[c]olonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world'.¹⁵ However, diaspora is not something that simply happened overseas. Europe is also *home* to significant postcolonial settler communities from, for

¹³ Chris Bongie, 'Belated Liaisons: writing between the margins of literary and cultural studies', *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 1.2 (2003), pp.11-24; and 'Exiles on Mainstream: valuing the popularity of postcolonial literature', *Postmodern Culture*, 14.1 (2003).

¹⁴ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford and NY: OUP, 1992). One of the few major works of postcolonial criticism to deal with popular culture in a sustained fashion is Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999).

¹⁵ Bill Ashcroft, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 69.

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

example, Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia. While 1492 has taken on a foundational significance in postcolonial studies as the year in which the Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas, it is often forgotten that this was also the year in which the North African Moors, who had occupied Spain for some 700 years, were ousted from Granada. Such prolonged *internal* presences mean that, as Paul Gilroy puts it, 'the figure of the migrant must be made part of Europe's history ...'.¹⁶

Gilroy's remark appears in the foreword to *Blackening Europe* (2004), a collection of essays that demonstrates how European cultural forms, from Spanish Flamenco to contemporary hip hop in France and Germany, have been accented by African music. More generally in this context, Paul Gilroy has emphasised 'non-place-based' forms of community that question the comforting boundaries between Europe and its Others.¹⁷ In *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Gilroy rejects the nation as an organising category by seeking 'to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective'.¹⁸ Rather than focusing on, say, 'black British' or 'African American' culture, *The Black Atlantic*:

settle[s] on the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol ... Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs.¹⁹

Circulation, movement, passage, journeying are Gilroy's preferred metaphors here, allowing him to move beyond what he takes to be the narrow, sclerotic confines of the

¹⁶ Raphael-Hernandez, *Blackening Europe: the African American Presence* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. xxi

¹⁷ Paul Gilroy 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity' in K. Woodward (ed.) *Identity and Difference* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 328

¹⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993) p. 15

¹⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993) p. 4

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

nation. Such metaphors allow Gilroy to demonstrate the extent to which the black presence has critically contributed to, and drawn upon, the supposedly discrete development of Western modernity. As John McLeod notes, '[t]his makes a nonsense both of the sense of the West as ethnically homogeneous, and of ideas concerning an essentialised, common 'black' community separated from Western influence'.²⁰ For Gilroy, the Atlantic's significance is more than symbolic (a metaphor for movement and migration), or geographical (as a space that divides and connects Europe, the US, Africa and the Caribbean). As the setting for the 'triangular' slave journeys that marked the beginning of a black diaspora in the sixteenth century, the Atlantic's significance is also historical. For almost 400 years, ships loaded with commercial goods set sail from Europe to the west coast of Africa, where cargo was exchanged for slaves. From here, waves of African slaves were forcibly shipped across the so-called 'middle passage' to the Americas and the plantation settlements of the Caribbean islands and to South and North America. The slave ships then returned to Europe loaded with sugar and other commodities from the colonies. By the time slavery was abolished in the nineteenth century (Britain 1834; Spain and Portugal 1840; US 1865) it is estimated over 10 million West Africans had been transported to the New World.

As well as being sites of misery, death and oppression, the slave ships facilitated the passage and exchange of new ideas and cultural formations. The triangular trade routes did not simply circulate human cargo and other precious commodities of empire, they also stimulated a transnational black imagination and calls for the abolition of slavery. The slave trade brought significant numbers of African slaves into the heart of the metropolitan centres of Europe. Often working as domestic servants, it was within the metropolis that exceptional figures such as Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780), Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) and Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) began to read and write, and where they found a ready outlet and audience for their work.

²⁰ John McLeod (2000) *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 229

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

It is within this context that Paul Gilroy argues the works of Equiano and Wheatley 'ask to be evaluated on their own terms as complex, *compound* formations ... Their legacy is most valuable as a mix, a hybrid, recombinant form, that is indebted to its "parent" culture, but remains assertively and insubordinately a bastard'.²¹ The mass movements of African slaves and of individuals like Wheatley and Equiano suggests a black Atlantic network which has nodal points in Africa, the United States and Europe, but which highlights movement (literal and imaginative) both beyond and between them.

Partly as a result of Gilroy's work, the intercultural perspectives of postcolonial and black Atlantic literature have been paid much closer attention within the academy in recent years. Indeed, by the 1990s there was a sense in which, as Elleke Boehmer put it, 'definitions of postcolonial literature ... [were] almost necessarily cosmopolitan, transplanted, multilingual, and conversant with the cultural codes of the West'.²² While Gilroy's notion of the black Atlantic offers no easy vision of cosmopolitanism and is notably alert to the pain and suffering that transatlantic travel historically denotes, it is arguably caught up in the tendencies outlined here by Boehmer.

More recently, Laura Chrisman, in her essay 'Journeying to Death: Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*', argues that Gilroy's version of diaspora is uncritically utopian and that it is too quick to delegitimise nationalism, which she insists has positive, or progressive elements.²³ She goes on to argue that Gilroy's recovery of Europe as a valuable site of African American cultural production (in, for example, the work of Du Bois and Wright) neglects Europe 'as historically, and structurally, oppressive for blacks from the colonies' (79). In support of her argument Chrisman refers to the Senegalese artist Sembene Ousmane, whose novel *Black Docker* (1973) focuses on the exploitation

²¹ Paul Gilroy 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity' in K. Woodward (ed.) *Identity and Difference* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p.323

²² Elleke Boehmer *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 237

²³ Chrisman, Laura 'Journeying to Death: Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*' in Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 73-88. For a similar, slightly earlier critique of Gilroy see Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999)

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

of a black migrant in Marseille. She also footnotes Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and Caryl Phillips' *The European Tribe* (1987) as instances of 'less-than-positive' representations of Europe.

The essays in this collection contribute further to this recent rethinking of diaspora studies within the context of postcolonial Europe. Elleke Boehmer observes how the dominant tradition of Anglophone postcolonial studies continues to influence and skew the reception of postcolonial writing in the Netherlands. Comparing the writings of Salman Rushdie with work by Neerlandophone diasporic writers, Boehmer pursues some of the problems that emerge when English is perceived as the dominant language of migrant expression. John McLeod's essay looks at the work of Mike Phillips and Caryl Phillips (including *The European Tribe*) within the broader context of black British writing in order to question the upbeat rhetoric of transnationalism associated with diaspora thinking. Anglophone notions of hybridity frequently neglect the fact that language itself represents a constitutive limit to cultural admixture. Through sensitive readings of Evaristo and others, McLeod identifies the emergence of a 'pan-European sense of anti-racist consciousness'. Such a consciousness appears politically urgent following the different (but clearly connected) national responses to the Paris riots (2005) and the Madrid (2004) and London bombings (2005). Finally, Aedin Ní Loingsigh offers a detailed comparative reading of *Maman a un amant* (1993) by Francophone Cameroonian author Calixthe Beyala, and *Brick Lane* (2003) by Anglo-Bangladeshi author Monica Ali. Focusing on travel, one of the dominant metaphors of postcolonial diasporic writing, criticism and theory, Ní Loingsigh exposes the tension between migration and tourism, to suggest how Europe has been 'rediscovered' by its 'Others'.

Postcolonial Diasporas Beyond Europe

This final section of the Introduction moves beyond the European contexts outlined above, engaging with a range of diasporic communities - particularly within the Americas, the Middle East and the Pacific - which are explored in sections two and three

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

of this book (entitled 'Nostalgia and Longing for Home' and 'Comparative Diasporic Contexts'). These essays investigate the complex relationships between diasporic communities and those who have remained in the 'homeland', as well as analysing interchanges of people, capital and ideologies across multiple diasporic locations beyond Europe.

The Americas, of course, feature a long and complex history of migration and settlement, from the founding of various European 'New World' communities in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, through the transportation of West African slaves between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the influx of various ethnic groups (such as Italians and Jews) fleeing persecution in Europe during the early-to-mid-twentieth century. As historian Paul Spickard points out, within the United States in particular, and until quite recently, dominant models of immigration commonly offered a utopian narrative of 'assimilation' in which non-native minorities were 'transplanted from their unattractive native country and deposited in more fertile soil in the United States'.²⁴ This model, as Spickard notes, suggests a 'one-way' flow of people who abandon their ancestral identities and assume 'an undifferentiated American identity' (10). In addition to assuming a process of 'ethnic oblivion', the immigrant assimilation model also overlooks important aspects of the migrant experience itself, implying that immigrants always remain in their adoptive country, when there is clear evidence that many Italians, Greeks and other Europeans who emigrated to America between 1880 and 1920, for example, subsequently returned to their home nations (10). Further, as Spickard observes, the immigrant assimilation model, with its 'fixation' on the U.S. as a destination, does not allow for the fact that migrants from a single country of origin were often dispersed across several different national destinations: in the first half of the twentieth century, for example, large numbers of Japanese people migrated not just to the

²⁴ Paul Spickard, 'Introduction: Pacific Diaspora?' in Paul Spickard, Joanne L. Rondilla and Debbie Hippolite Wright (eds.) *Pacific Diasporas: Island Peoples in the United States and Across the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), p. 9.

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

U.S. but also to Peru, Brazil, Manchuria and Micronesia. Similarly, many Germans and Italians settled not just in the U.S. but also in South America (Spickard 2002: 11).

The late 1980s witnessed the emergence of new postcolonial diasporic paradigms that transcended some of the limitations of the immigrant assimilation model discussed above. Rather than reproducing unidirectional models of migration, more recent theoretical interventions have emphasised the transnational, multifaceted nature of migration, as well as developing more complex methods by which to analyse interconnections between the 'home nation' and the various destination regions chosen by members of particular diasporic communities. Within the Americas, for example, anthropologist Roger Rouse has offered a suggestive analysis of the interlinked Mexican communities of Aguililla (Michoacán) and Redwood City (California), pointing out that developments in telecommunications and other technologies have created 'spatially extended relationships' between Mexicans throughout the Americas. As Rouse argues, such examples prove that former theories of migration as 'a movement between distinct communities, understood as the loci of distinct sets of social relationships' are no longer adequate.²⁵ In this collection, Bill Marshall's essay on French diasporic communities within St-Pierre et Miquelon and New Orleans similarly stretches the boundaries of migration theory, offering a comparative analysis of two 'Atlantic' locations that are rarely (if ever) discussed within existing analyses of French diaspora culture. Marshall's analysis moves beyond orthodox views of French diaspora culture as centred on the metropolitan nation-state, instead exploring the complex circulation of cultural forms and representations within and across these two diasporic locations. Marshall's analysis of the traces of French diaspora in Canada and the U.S. therefore opens up a potential dialogue between former rival colonisers and the colonies themselves.

As an alternative to the homogenising assimilationist paradigm discussed above, some theorists of American diaspora culture have advocated the 'panethnicity' model of migration, in which formerly separate ethnic groups are amalgamated into categories

²⁵ Roger Rouse, 'Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism', *Diaspora* 1.1 (1991): 13; quoted in Spickard, p. 12.

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

such as 'Asian-American', 'African-American' or 'Hispanic'. For U.S. migrant peoples, the panethnicity model has proven both enabling - as witnessed in pan-ethnic self-determination initiatives such as the black civil rights movement - and disempowering, given (for example) that white American slave owners deliberately attempted to erode the national identities of their slaves in order to prevent collective resistance. Undeniably, the panethnicity model of diaspora culture shares some of the limitations of the immigrant assimilation paradigm, in that it tends to focus on the experiences of succeeding generations in the new location, rather than investigating connections to immigrants' places of origin.²⁶ While Vanessa Knights's essay in this collection explores the experiences of 'Hispanic' or 'Latin' Americans, one of the largest 'panethnic' communities in the U.S., it nevertheless transcends the limitations of the panethnicity model by focusing on nostalgia – and in particular, the currency of popular cultural forms such as the bolero – as a means by which Puerto Rican immigrants to New York have remained in dialogue with their country of origin. Knights's essay focuses in particular upon the boleros associated with the wave of Puerto Rican migration to the mainland U.S. in the 1930s and 1940s, but she also discusses the way in which contemporary 'Nuyorican' poetry and popular culture adapt traditional forms and musical motifs to contemporary realities. As she argues, memory and nostalgia remain key elements in Nuyorican cultural production, mediating the psychological trauma of the diasporic experience.

Celia Britton's article on French Caribbean diasporas, which opens the third section of this collection, also engages with the trauma of exile, eschewing more abstract theoretical formulations celebrating the 'mobility' of Antillean migrations, and investigating the way in which French Caribbean novels of the 1950s and 1960s figure the experience of exile as imprisonment. Using an innovative, transcultural comparative approach, Britton examines the way in which French Caribbean writers invoke the incarcerated Jew of the holocaust as a model for the sense of 'imprisonment' experienced

²⁶ See Spickard 2002: 14-15 for a more detailed analyses of these models.

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

by French Caribbeans during the mid-twentieth century. Britton is careful to acknowledge the significant differences as well as the similarities between these two diasporic communities, pointing out that the relationship to 'the lost mother-country' varies considerably in each case: as she notes, rather than an ancestral holy land, for example, the Caribbean is ambivalently represented as a source of 'longing' but also of 'disentitlement and lack'.

Britton's references to the Middle East resonate with Patrick Williams's essay on the Palestinian diaspora, which appears in section two of this collection. As Williams points out, while the Israeli Law of Return allows Jews from anywhere in the world to settle in Israel, Israelis have consistently refused to allow exiled Palestinians to return to the land of their birth. Focusing in particular on the work of renowned Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, Williams considers the efficacy of conventional formulations of diasporic identity – in which an eventual return to the homeland remains a perpetual possibility – in a context in which the right of return is denied. Williams's essay concludes by exploring Edward Said's argument that 'returning to ourselves', rather than to the land, might be the only form of 'return' currently available to Palestinian peoples.

Settler colonies, such as those in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa, present a further context in which particular ethnic groups have been displaced (and in some cases, exterminated) by others. While indigenous patterns of migration and exile within white settler colonies have been well-documented in postcolonial studies, much less attention has been devoted to the complex relationship between white settler diasporas and their metropolitan homeland(s). By the early 1990s, when postcolonial studies was firmly established as an academic discipline, antipodean scholars such as Stephen Slemon noted that in its focus upon the dialectical relationships between the 'first' and 'third' worlds, postcolonial studies had overlooked the importance of the literatures of white settler diasporas. In his essay 'Unsettling the empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World', for example, Slemon argued that white settler-colonial

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

writing – categorised by Australian scholar Alan Lawson as ‘Second World’ writing²⁷ – had been ignored almost entirely by postcolonial scholars, putatively ‘because it [was considered] not sufficiently pure in its anti-colonialism, because it [did] not offer up an experiential grounding in a common ‘Third World’ aesthetics, [and] because its modalities of *post*-coloniality [were considered] too ambivalent, too occasional and uncommon, for inclusion within the field’ (Slemon 1996 [1990]: 77). Slemon observed that on the rare occasions where they were acknowledged, settler literatures were commonly grouped together with ‘First World’ writing as a subcategory of the literature of Empire.

The late 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium, however, have witnessed the emergence and consolidation of ‘settlement studies’ as a distinct field within postcolonial and cultural studies, particularly within the antipodes. The 1999 critical anthology *Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, for example, contained a number of important essays on antipodean settler communities, including Stephen Turner’s article ‘Settlement as Forgetting’, which explores the ‘vexed relation between national identity and cultural origin’ within New Zealand settler society in particular.²⁸ Turner argues that rather than taking refuge in foundational narratives of settlement, contemporary settler culture in New Zealand locates itself primarily ‘in the present’, and that ‘the will to forget the trauma of dislocation and unsettlement has taken the form of a psychic structure’ of disavowal (21). The process of ‘forgetting’ involves not only cutting ties with the ‘mother country’ (Britain), but also ignoring the prior claims of the indigenous Maori people, who have

²⁷ In world systems theory, the ‘Second World’ label has conventionally been applied to communist nations, particularly those in eastern Europe (prior to the fall of communism), but in a paper delivered in 1986, Lawson argued that ‘Second World’ was a useful label for settler-colonial cultures ambivalently positioned between the colonising ‘First World’ and the colonised ‘Third World’. Alan Lawson, “‘There is Another World but It Is in This One’: A Cultural Paradigm for the Second World,” Paper given at the Badlands Conference on Australian and Canadian Literatures, Calgary, Alberta, 1986.

²⁸ Stephen Turner, ‘Settlement as Forgetting’, in Klaus Neumann, Nicholas Thomas and Hilary Ericksen (eds.) *Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1999), p. 20.

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

been displaced through the violent excesses of the colonial encounter. These suppressed histories thus create an inarticulable sense of 'loss and separation', as settlers deny their 'immigrant', 'diasporic' status yet still seek to distinguish themselves from aboriginal peoples (22).²⁹ In his monograph *The Politics of Ethnicity in Settler Societies: States of Unease* (2001),³⁰ sociologist David Pearson explores similar issues within a broader geographical context, exploring the ways in which immigration patterns, geopolitical reconfigurations, and 'the self-determinative politics of aboriginality' have created new anxieties and crosscurrents within 'post-settler' societies in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Pearson is particularly attentive to the ways in which recent debates over globalisation and the 'fluidity of ethnic identities and boundaries' have overshadowed questions of national and historical specificity, and his study attempts to situate recent debates on diaspora and transnationalism alongside the specific pre- and post-contact histories of the various ethnic groups located within modern post-settler societies. A similar strategy is evident in the 2005 collection *Figuring the Pacific: Aotearoa & Pacific Cultural Studies* (edited by Howard McNaughton and John Newton), in which essays on indigenous histories and cultural movements appear alongside analyses of foundational narratives and contemporary developments in antipodean settler cultures. The collection explores new horizons in antipodean cultural studies, including (for example) the recent 'reclamation and celebration' of Australia's convict history as a distinct chapter in the history of white settlement in the Pacific.³¹ McNaughton and Newton's collection is a part of a burgeoning new corpus of scholarship on antipodean diaspora culture, building upon other recent analyses such as the special 'settlement studies' issue of the *Journal of New Zealand Literature* (2002), which included a variety of essays on New Zealand and

²⁹ Stephen Turner, 'Being Colonial/ Colonial Being', *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 20 (2002): 39-66.

³⁰ David Pearson, *The Politics of Ethnicity in Settler Societies: States of Unease* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001).

³¹ See Frances Kelly, 'Whipped into Shape: Convict bodies and colonial narratives', in Howard McNaughton and John Newton (eds.) *Figuring the Pacific: Aotearoa and Pacific Cultural Studies* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005).

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

'New World' settler diasporas.³² In our collection, Janet Wilson's essay on the white settler societies of New Zealand and Australia extends the parameters of these recent debates, investigating the ways in which twentieth-century antipodean authors have refashioned idealised images of the metropolitan homeland(s) of Europe inherited from the early settlers. Wilson suggests that a reassessment of the experiences of pioneering settlers, examined alongside these literary texts, reveals a complex variety of subject positions inflected by specificities of gender, national identity and ethnicity.

Mohit Prasad's essay on the Indo-Fijian diaspora introduces a further layer of complexity to the discussion of Pacific diaspora culture, moving beyond the white settler/indigene dialectic discussed above in order to explore the experiences of the descendants of indentured labourers transported from India to colonial (British) Fiji during the late nineteenth century. Indo-Fijians have undergone two major diasporic phases: the first between 1879 and 1916, when some sixty thousand Indian labourers were transported to the sugar plantations of Fiji; and the second in the wake of the Fiji military coups of 1987 and 2000, after which thousands of Indo-Fijians left the country to escape discriminatory legislation designed to prioritise the claims of indigenous Fijians. Building upon the work of established scholars of Indo-Fijian diaspora culture such as Vijay Mishra and Brij Lal,³³ Prasad offers an innovative comparative analysis of Indo-Fijian diasporic communities within Fiji, Sydney and Liverpool (Australia), demonstrating the way in which the 'work ethic' embraced and idealised by Indo-Fijians has been transported and transmuted within (and beyond) these multiple diasporic locations. Prasad's essay, which concludes the third section of this book, is followed by a postscript in which Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden undertake a comparative analysis

³² Calder, Alex and Stephen Turner (eds.) *Settlement Studies: Special Issue of the Journal of New Zealand Literature* 20 (2002).

³³ See, for example, Vijay Mishra's essays 'Indo-Fijian Fiction: Towards an Interpretation', *World Literature Written in English* 16.2 (1977): 395-409, and 'The Girit ideology Revisited: Fiji Indian Literature' in Emmanuel Nelson (ed.) *Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora* (New York: Greenwood, 1992), 1-12; and Brij Lal's historical study *Mr Tulsi's Store: A Fijian Journey* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2001) as well as his edited collection *Bittersweet: the Indo-Fijian Experience* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2004).

Please refer to the published volume for citation purposes.

of contemporary cinematic images of diaspora. This final piece attempts to move beyond the diasporic debates of the earlier chapters by examining the transnational formations now emerging within postcolonial discourse, and suggesting ways in which the boundaries of postcolonial diaspora theory are being redefined in some of the most experimental zones of contemporary cultural production. In this sense, the postscript encapsulates the objectives of this entire collection, which seeks to delineate, develop and anticipate new directions in postcolonial diaspora studies in the new millennium, as well as advancing new transcolonial and transdisciplinary approaches that promise to shape future developments in the field.